Letter from Robert Schreiber to Leo Bogart, 08-27-1997

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Leo Bogart, Box 72, folder 3

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Dr. Leo Bogart
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Dear Leo,

I suspect you remember me although I retired from Time Inc. in 1986. After reading the article in the Times today about Elizabeth Noelle Neumann, I thought I'd give you a story to tell.

In the early ~~40~~ 80s, Clark Schiller and I engaged the Allensbach Institute to do some work for us in the readership area. It was related to some basic work we had done, and we were attracted to Allensbach because of two very bright youngsters they had there. Before I get to Elizabeth, I thought you might appreciate a story about one of the youngsters.

At a dinner one night with several Germans and several Americans, (most of the latter were Jews), one of these youngsters told us that his father had died in WWII. What did he do? Oh, he was in the Waffen SS. And he died, I asked. "Yah". My reply was, "Mazel tov", to which the German responded, "Thank you!"

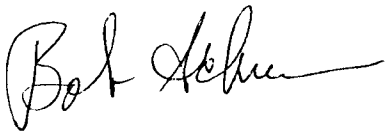
Clark and I were in Allensbach for a meeting with the researchers - we stayed in Zurich since the little town of Konstanz near Allensbach was filled with former German soldiers still wearing their long leather coats, a la a bad Errol Flynn movie, and we were most uncomfortable. At lunch time, Elizabeth joined us and invited Clark and me to her lakeside home for lunch. I was wearing a tie, a special tie I wore every time I had to go to Germany, a tie covered with little figures, each of which said, in Hebrew, CHAI.

Elizabeth asked me, "Is that Jewish letters on your tie?" I allowed as how it was Hebrew for "life" and I wore it in Germany where six million of my fellow Jews were killed. (Actually, most were killed in Poland, etc.) "Ach", Elizabeth replied, "During zee var, ve vere not very nize to the Chews." Clark blew up - "Not nice - you ***** Nazis killed six million of us!!!!!" and he pounded on the table for emphasis, spilling red wine over everything.

After mopping up, we questioned Elizabeth, gently, about what SHE did during the war. She was curiously mum, and allowed how that her time was spent mostly as a housewife. But her emotions were not in control, and she hastily told us about her lectures at the Hebrew University,

and her position at the U of Chicago.(Not surprisingly "some of her best friends were Jews.") We left feeling very certain that she had been involved in the Nazi apparatus somehow. And now, thanks to your stimulus, our feelings seemed to have been validated.

We did no more work with Allensbach after that time. During the experience, we learned about her views on random sampling (she was opposed) and heard much about her vaunted polling accuracy. Humility was not one of her strengths.

I thought you might be interested in this anecdote. Now, I am going to have to read your Commentary article and the article in the Journal of Higher Ed.

Sincerely,